

December 2024

The Master thesis in political science is an original research project in which students demonstrate the ability to apply the knowledge acquired during the courses. The master thesis is supervised by a supervisor. In case you plan to write your thesis under the supervision of Professors Basu, Bechtel or Proksch, please take the following guidelines into consideration:

Allocation of Master thesis supervision

The Institute for Political Science and European Affairs has introduced a system for the allocation of Master thesis supervision in 2021. You will receive an email with a link to a respective survey at the end of your **second semester**. The goal of this allocation system is to ensure a balanced distribution of theses to supervisors. Please respond to this survey until the set deadline regardless of when you intend to start your thesis. If you already have a supervisor or have even already started writing your thesis, please also respond to the survey to indicate this.

In the survey you are asked to submit a draft research idea for your thesis (maximum 500 words). This does not need to be a fully worked out research design, but it should describe the research questions or areas you would like to focus your thesis on. Together with your preliminary research idea, you will need to indicate a ranking of 3 preferred supervisors for the thesis.

By October, the Executive Manager of the Institute and Program Director Dr. Birgit Bujard will inform you about the assigned supervisor. Both your research idea and your indicated preferences for a supervisor will be taken into account. However, please note that we cannot guarantee that you will receive your first choice if there are more requests than available supervision slots for a particular supervisor. Please note that if you do not participate in the survey, we will assign a supervisor to you.

The allocation will be communicated both to you and the assigned supervisor. We recommend that you contact your assigned supervisor to discuss your idea and your intended timeline for the thesis project (see below). Please note that the exact starting date of your thesis project will be when you agree on the exact final topic with your supervisor.

A change of supervisors is possible before you register for the thesis examination. However, this requires a joint agreement between the current and future supervisor. If you intend to switch supervisors, please get in touch with the Executive Manager and Program Director Dr. Birgit Bujard to discuss the procedure. Once you register for the Master thesis examination (starting the 6-month period for the thesis, see below), the supervisor is set as the first examiner of your thesis.

Contacting (potential) supervisor

1. Either after the allocation or before please discuss your initial project idea with either your allocated supervisor or with one of the professors of the Institute during office hours. It is strongly recommended that you have attended a course with this professor or one of her/his team members. It is advisable to contact a professor whose fields of expertise and interest fit to your project idea. To find out more about their research interests, check their Websites.
2. On the basis of the first discussion, work out a short draft research design (exposé), which necessarily must include the following items (around 3-5 pages):
 - Working title
 - Research Question: Which central question or research puzzle do you want to answer in your thesis?
 - A brief description of the state of the art
 - Theoretical framework, including working hypotheses
 - Proposed methods and techniques
 - Description of the data needed for implementation and explanation of its availability
3. Discuss your draft research design subsequently in the respective office hours. Send your draft at least a week before consultation appointment via email.
4. In case you contact a prospective supervisor before the allocation process, it is a matter of clarifying whether the project seems feasible. Please note that the professors remain free to determine whether or not they are able to supervise the thesis as long as the allocation process is not finalised. If there is a consensus and supervision is agreed, you have to indicate this in the survey of the allocation process.

PoliSci Research Seminar

1. In order to register for the PoliSci Research Seminar (each Professor does an individual one) you have to agree on a presentation date with your supervisor. The registration in KLIPS is handled by the respective office of your supervisor. Please refrain from registering yourself. Usually, you should agree on a presentation date in the term before you intent to present.
2. Regular participation in the Research Seminar as well as the presentation of your project in this framework are required. The Research Seminar is split into two parts: sessions hosted by your supervisor and researcher and guest presentations on Tuesday 2pm. You are expected to attend both.
3. The final thesis title must be registered with the examination office (see below). You will then have 6 months to complete your research.

Requirements:

- Please note the admission requirements as well as the processing deadlines in the respective examination regulations for [WiSo 2015/2021 students](#)
- Your political science topic addresses a question that fits in with the priorities of your supervisor
- You participated in lectures or seminars of the Institute

Registration of the MA thesis at the examination office:

After the explicit confirmation by the supervising team member, the master thesis has to be registered with the corresponding examination office.

Please discuss with your supervisor, which team member might act as a second reader and get her/his approval before registering the thesis.

For registration, a form issued by the responsible supervisors must be signed. Please contact the secretariat (polisci.office@wiso.uni-koeln.de) for issuing the form and please provide the following information: name, student ID number (Matrikelnummer), topic of thesis, first and second reader as well as the examination regulation you are studying under eg. Master PO 2021). This signed registration form is sent to the examination office by Institute staff.

At the moment of registering your master thesis the writing period starts and your submission deadline will be communicated to you in writing by the examination office.

Important:

When you have registered the thesis, the title cannot be changed (!).

Submission of the MA thesis:

The finished master thesis has to be submitted on time (!) to the examination office. **The submission of theses in electronic form via the WiSo-Inbox is recommended.**

Make sure to check the Website of the Examination Office regarding the submission of your thesis ahead of submitting. There you will find the definite regulations:

<https://wiso.uni-koeln.de/en/faculty/managing-board/central-faculty-administration/examination-office/2015-2021-examination-regulations/final-theses>.

Written confirmation of the submission of the thesis is not possible. The submission of the thesis is usually recorded in Klips within three working days at the latest and the thesis is then forwarded to the examiner for correction.

The submitted file may only contain the cover sheet, the text of the thesis and an overview of the resources used, in particular the literature sources used. If the topic proposer requires additional data on the work (e.g. tools used), these are to be sent directly to the examiner in consultation with them. Please refrain from submitting the thesis more than once. Only the version submitted first will be considered.

Writing the thesis / Formalities:

Always inform yourself on the pages of your [examination office](#) and in your study regulations about the exact form. Information from the WiSo Examination Office on final theses including an updated sample declaration of consent can be found [here](#).

Other formalia are:

- 1.5-fold line spacing
- 12-Point Font (Calibri)
 - right margin: 3 cm
 - left margin: 2 cm

The work must also contain:

- a list of tools used (bibliography)
- an affidavit (Eidesstattliche Erklärung) signed by you which you can find on the pages of the examination office.

In line with exam regulations, there is no binding minimum or maximum page limit. As the length of a thesis depends on the research design chosen, the Institute provides no general recommendation in that regard. As a non-binding orientation mark: MA theses at the Institute are often around 60 pages long, but feel free to discuss alternative plans with your supervisor.

For more information on formalities, citation and an introduction to the literature search, see the document [Recommendations on Scientific Working Techniques](#) of the Institute for Political Science and European Affairs ([Techniken des wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens](#)).